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SUBJECT: Improving Human Rights vetting processing from Washington

¶1. In 2007, the Narcotics Affairs Section (NAS) in Port-au-Prince assumed responsibility for handling the human rights vetting at Post in compliance with the Department of State Leahy Amendment. Post has developed a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for Leahy vetting. However, we have encountered problems, particularly with individuals or small groups, in getting a timely response from Washington to vetting requests. Although individual desk officers have provided valuable service to Post in such cases, Port-au-Prince would like to make the following suggestions with an eye toward improving the vetting process and communication between Posts and Washington in a timely manner:

A) Once the vetting request cable from Post reaches Washington, Post should receive (via e-mail or phone call) an estimate of the time to expect results.

B) Develop a process, including a possible waiver mechanism, for conducting a vetting request for urgent and time-sensitive training. How fast can we expedite truly high priority requests?

C) At Post, we operate on the assumption of a standardized framework for Washington's reply, depending on the number to vet, and would like to establish with Washington an accurate framework within which to expect replies. For example, Post has been using the following: Less than 5 business days for a list of 15 or less persons; 5 to 10 days for a list of 16-100 persons; 15 business days for over 100 persons.

D) We sometimes vet the same people more than once in a year - Washington should pursue an option similar to that of DOD that allows for vetting to remain valid for a specific length of time (at least six months, preferably a year).

E) Develop two tracks for vetting based on the number to be vetted or the size of the Post. This would allow quick turnaround on individuals or small groups attending time-sensitive training without throwing them into the queue with hundreds of vetting requests related to long-term training or on-going employment, as is now the case.

F) Designate POCs and alternates for Posts to use in urgent cases, and ensure that Posts are informed when staffing changes occur. When response from Washington is delayed and threatens to delay or cancel training, it is important to know who to reach out to to expedite matters.

¶2. Post appreciates Washington's efforts to help improve and expedite the vetting process. Post believes that implementation of the steps above could lead to a more effective system with less strain on resources for all involved.
Sanderson